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## **Settlement Experiences of Bangladeshi Women Migrants in Australia**

### **Abstract**

*This study examines the settlement experiences of Bangladeshi women living in Australia by focusing on the facilitators of and barriers to successful settlement. It also explores how different settlement indicators vary across gender. Using both quantitative and qualitative data collected from 210 Bangladeshi migrants living in three states of Australia and through 52 semi structured interviews respectively, this study reveals that migration brings comfort, freedom and power for many women on the one hand, while on the other, reduced economic opportunities are also common. Aside from non-recognition of qualifications, responsibility towards young children and domestic duties is associated with downward mobility of women migrants. Unlike common literature the research argues that low qualified women may attain a better satisfaction with life compared with highly educated women.*

**Key words:** Settlement experience, Bangladeshi migrants, women migrants

### **Introduction:**

International migration of women has become widespread in the present world. Thus, in 1990, the number of the world stock of women migrants was 79 million of which increased to about 118 million in 2015 – a 50% increase in a span of 25 years (UN 2015). The share of women migrants in the total stock of international migrants is nearly half (48.2%) in 2015 (UN 2015). Consequently, the issue of settlement experience of women has gained currency in migration literature in recent years.

Examining women migrants' settlement is particularly important because they differ from men in terms of their skill level, legal status, country of origin, entry mode in the host country as migrants, and types of jobs they perform (Piper 2008). Although, women's migration, in general, is seen as associational in which the decision to migrate is linked directly with the employment prospect of men (e.g. Altamirano 1997, Thapan 2005), a growing number of women are migrating on their own as well (UNFPA 2006). Therefore, settlement experiences of female migrants in terms of their labour market participation, network generation, belongings, diasporas, and vulnerability are likely to be different and more complicated than men's (Schrover & Yo 2011; Thapan 2005, p. 24).

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*Objective:* Against this backdrop the objective of this study is to examine the settlement experiences of Bangladeshi women migrants in Australia, and compare it with the experiences of their male counterparts. In so doing this paper focuses on the facilitators of and barriers to successful settlement. Therefore, both positive and negative outcomes of migration experienced by the Bangladeshi women in Australia are examined in this research.

*Significance:* Since the abolition of the White Australian policy<sup>1</sup> in the early 1970s, a trend in Australian immigration is the dominance of immigrants from Asian countries. In recent decades, Bangladesh has become a new source country of skilled immigrants to Australia.<sup>2</sup> The Department of Immigration and Citizenship of Australia (DIAC 2014) reveals that Bangladesh was one of the top 10 source countries for the General Skilled Migration (GSM) program from 2006 to 2011. According to the latest census (ABS 2011) nearly 28,000 Bangladeshi people live in Australia, with an average growth rate of 18.5% per annum since the 1990s. This makes Bangladeshi migrants one of the fastest-growing communities in Australia. Australian Bureau of Statistics also reports that women migrants comprise nearly half of the total Bangladeshi population; that is 42.6% are female (ABS 2011).

Despite this there is no dedicated study on this fastest growing community. Especially there is a dearth of knowledge about Bangladeshi women migrants, and whether their settlement experiences differ from their male counterpart. Research on migration of Bangladeshi women often emphasises on short term female migrants who migrate to different countries as domestic workers and care service providers (Barakat & Manzuma 2014; Sultana & Fatima 2017). These women are mostly originated from low socio-cultural setting with little or no educational background. Their struggle, challenge and vulnerability are the basis of those researches. However, as skilled migrants or spouses of skilled migrants in developed countries, Bangladeshi women's experiences are likely to be diverse from those who travel to other countries as low profiled workers.

In order to fill this gap this study focuses on the experiences of women who permanently migrate from Bangladesh to Australia.

*Method:* This empirical study is based on primary data collected through a survey and semi-structured interviews conducted among Bangladeshi migrants in Australia. Data has been collected from the Bangladeshi community living in three Australian states: New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland, where, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2011), more than 89 per cent of Bangladeshi migrants are concentrated. Included in this study samples are individuals above 18 years of age (both male and female) born in Bangladesh, and living in these three states as Australian permanent residents or citizens.<sup>3</sup> Using a structured questionnaire, quantitative information has been collected from 210

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<sup>1</sup> The Immigration Restriction Act, 1901, underpinned the White Australia policy

<sup>2</sup> Other countries are China, India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

<sup>3</sup> Data for this study were collected during 2012 and 2013 while the author was conducting PhD research in Australia.

Bangladeshi migrants, 46 percent of whom are women. This survey data have been supported by semi-structured follow-up interviews with 52 respondents, about half of whom are women.

*Results:* The study reveals that Bangladeshi male migrants and female migrants are quite distinct in terms of economic participation, satisfaction with jobs and also satisfaction with life after migration. This study also shows that women migrants' labour force participation has increased since they arrived in Australia. However, this higher participation occurs at the expense of lower occupational status for many women. Non-recognition of pre-migration qualification which is mainly responsible for occupational degradation is particularly pronounced for women. Aside from non-recognition of qualifications, responsibilities for young children and domestic duties are associated with downward mobility of women migrants. Findings also suggest that despite the increased workload, migration in general brings freedom, empowerment, comfort and happiness for Bangladeshi women.

*Structure of the paper:* The rest of the paper is structured as follows. Section two reviews relevant theories and empirical literature related to the settlement of migrants, and gendered dimension in migration literature. Findings of the study are discussed and interpreted in section three. The final section concludes the paper by summarising the main findings of the research.

### **Literature Review:**

Settlement of migrants is a complex issue and there is no agreed definition of this concept. More importantly, the objective of settlement has been changing over time. Bouma (1994, p. 38) defines settlement as an "ongoing process by which immigrants make the transition from life in one country to life in a new country". Burnett (1998, p 18) also considers settlement a process that occurs gradually. She adds that settlement is constructed by the immigrants' interaction with various elements of the political, economic, and social structure of the host society.

*Indicators of successful settlement:* Researchers demonstrate various indicators of successful settlement. Most common among them are economic factors (Khoo and McDonald 2001; Mahuteau & Junankar 2008; Piracha, Tani & Vadean 2010). Labour market participation, income and job satisfaction are to be considered while measuring successful settlement (Lester 2009; Khoo & McDonald 2001). At the same time the social and cultural participation, physical and mental wellbeing and also satisfaction with the life in the country of destination indicate how well migrants' settlement is occurring (Thornley 2010). Home ownership and citizenship are also marked as important indicators of successful settlement (Richardson et al 2002; Khoo & McDonald 2001). Furthermore, a sense of belonging shows how well migrants are incorporating in the host society (Henderson 2004, p. 9).

*Factors affecting successful settlement:* Studies on migrant settlement develop a contextual framework containing factors affecting settlement. Facilitators of and barriers to successful settlement are incorporated in those frames (Sam & Berry 1996; Berry 1997). On the basis of Sam and Berry's (1996) work Cabassa (2003, p. 131) explains that the factors of successful settlement are related to 'prior to immigration context', 'immigration context' and 'settlement context'. Minas

(1990, p. 262, cited in Burnett 1998) provides a similar framework in which he arranges settlement factors into three groups: 'pre-migration, migration and post-migration variables'.

Pre- migration context includes factors related to country of origin and individual attributes. Migrants' demographic factors such as age, education, gender, marital status, ethnicity, religion, cultural and family backgrounds significantly influence the settlement of migrants. Proficiency in the language of the host country has also been identified as important factor in successful settlement (Fletcher 1999; Burnett 1998).

*Gender and Settlement:* Gender plays an important role in migrants' settlement. Literature suggests that men are likely to experience settlement differently to women. That is, despite coming from similar socio-cultural and economic backgrounds, and also having similar educational qualifications men and women may attain different settlement experience. Thapan (2005) argues that women migrants' experiences are likely to be much more complicated than men's. Therefore, the transitions migrant women experience are multiple and complex.

Domestic responsibility often creates barriers to the acculturation of women. Instead of adapting to the broader host society, women find that migration intensifies their domestic workloads, a phenomenon that has been termed 'migration as feminisation' (Ho 2004, 2006; Salway 2007; Mirdal 1984). Moreover, domestic responsibility coupled with their reproductive role causes a decline in women's employment. Thus, in spite of high educational qualifications and a good command of the host country's language, many women initially give up their career, or switch to a part-time or more flexible occupation, as indicated by Meares (2010). Some may resume after their children are established in school (Purkayastha 2005, p. 189). This can often result in 'painful shifts in identity' from professional to housewife, from economic contributor to dependant, and consequently 'a sense of grief and loss' may engulf those women (Meares 2010, p. 479). On the other hand, men (particularly from traditional societies) are likely to engage with their host society much earlier as they usually precede women in gaining work and access to services (Ahmed 2005; Ho 2006).

Due to the absence of family support migrant, women find giving birth and child-care more challenging abroad than in their homeland (Yan 2004; Chu 2011). Furthermore, Johnson (1998) observes that men decrease their support in household activities as they find outdoors are more demanding than the domestic duties (cited in Thomas 2003, p. 43). As a whole, migrant women face a 'series of extra barriers in each arena of their lives – work, community, family – in order to rebuild their lives and careers' (Purkayastha 2005, p. 195). As Martin (2003) asserts that women may face dual problems, some arising from their status as migrant or foreigner and others due to their being women.

On the other hand, it is argued that migration may well enhance the autonomy and power of women and can be seen as a potentially liberating experience for them (Martin 2003; Westwood & Phizacklea 2000). However, these positive effects can isolate them from family support networks and cultural norms, which could impose extra pressure on women's capacity to settle in a new environment (Kabeer 2000; Gardner 2002).

### Findings and discussion:

Based on the information collected through surveys and interviews, this section now explores various aspects of settlement, experienced by the Bangladeshi women living in Australia.

**Positive outcomes of migration for Bangladeshi women in Australia:** Women respondents in this study feel that migration has brought about a number of positive changes in their lives. Chief among them is increased economic participation. Moreover, participants commonly related that migration had brought them freedom, comfort and happiness. A number of respondents also expressed appreciation for their husbands' help within the household which, for socio-cultural reasons, was not often seen in Bangladesh. Driving their own car, taking holidays, and exploring the beauty of Australia they identified as some of the most important aspects of life after migration. These factors, which contribute to their high level of satisfaction with life in Australia, are discussed below:

*Economic participation :* Data shows that women's involvement in the workforce increases after migration. In order to portray a clear picture about the economic activities of women, and make a comparative discussion, pre-migration employment status of men and women is presented in Table 1. The table shows that 44% of female respondents were engaged in the workforce prior to migration, whereas more than 80 percent of male respondents were employed.

Table 1: Employment status of respondents before migration

	Total (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Working	66.0	81.0	44.0
Not working	34.0	19.0	56.0
N	202	119	83

On the other hand, after migration 70% of women respondents are in the workforce; the corresponding percentage for men is 98% (please see Table 2). As far as employment is concerned, more than 75% of male respondents worked full-time or were self-employed, with a corresponding figure of only 42% for women. Thus, the table clearly indicates that Bangladeshi women migrants are less integrated in the labour market than men.

Table 2: Respondents' labour market participation (by gender)

Gender		
Participation	Male (%)	Female (%)
Self-employed	20.2	9.5
Employed full-time	55.5	32.1
Employed part-time	14.3	19.1
Looking for job	8.4	9.1
Not looking for job	1.6	30.2
N	119	84

However, it is noteworthy that more women work after migration than before. This percentage is much higher after migration (60%). It is notable that women respondents' participation in the workforce (70%) exceeds the Australian average for women aged 20-74 years (65%) (ABS 2011). Thus, it can be assumed that migration has created (or necessitated) greater scope for women to participate in the economy.

Qualitative information has come up with an interesting finding, that is, less qualified women are likely to integrate into the labour market more easily than those with high educational qualifications. Many respondents with less education (no bachelor or university degrees) said they were aware that they would struggle to join the workforce with their qualifications and, in some cases, their level of English-language ability. To overcome this, they attended language courses as needed, and then enrolled in certificate courses (such as aged care, child-care, hairdressing, and hospitality management). On the other hand, highly educated women find it difficult to incorporate in the labour market when they fail to utilise their pre-migration qualifications (consequence of non-recognition of qualifications is discussed later).

*Satisfaction with job and life after migration:* A deep satisfaction with job and life after migration directly correlated to economic engagement and level of income (Shafiq 2016). Data shows that women earn significantly less than men (Table 3). This can be attributed to the fact that in the main they work at the lower end of the job ladder, which is considered along with the fact that many are working part-time.

Table 3: Respondents' personal income (by gender)

Income	Gender	
	Male (%)	Female (%)
Less than 40,000	25.8	47.9
40,001- 80,000	26.1	27.8
80,001- 120,000	35.6	20.1
120,001-140,000	10.6	4.2
140,001 and above	1.9	-
N	104	48

However, despite their low income, women seem to be more satisfied with their jobs than men are. Table 4 indicates that a higher proportion of women (76%) claim to be very satisfied or satisfied with their job. The corresponding figure for men is 67%. Conversely, fewer women than men say they are dissatisfied with their job. For example, only 4% of women report job dissatisfaction, compared with 14% of men.

Table 4: Respondents' job satisfaction (by gender)

	Gender	
	Male (%)	Female (%)
Very satisfied	26.8	34.0
Satisfied	40.0	42.0
Fairly satisfied	19.4	20.0
Not very satisfied	9.2	4.0
Not satisfied at all	4.6	-
N	109	50

Satisfaction with life is also significantly different across gender. Interestingly, it is the women who are more satisfied with their life in Australia than their male counterparts. Table 5 shows that more than 19% of women are very satisfied with their life in this country, compared with only 6% of men.

Table 5: Respondents' life satisfaction (by gender)

Life satisfaction	Gender	
	Male (%)	Female (%)
Very satisfied	6.2	19.1
Satisfied	42.2	46.6
Fairly satisfied	39.0	31.0
Not satisfied	9.7	3.4
Not satisfied at all	0.9	-
N	113	89

It is puzzling that women respondents, whose economic participation and income are both less than men's, report greater satisfaction with life. One logical explanation for this may be the presence of 'gendered reasons' for satisfaction that differ between men and women. That is to say, migration particularly benefits women in ways that are important to them than economic reward. These additional benefits may account for women's testimony that they are pleased with life in greater measure than their male counterparts. This inference would appear to be correct because it has been found that migration confers a number of identifiable benefits on many Bangladeshi women, ranging from safety to freedom and empowerment. The following discussion testifies this assumption with some qualitative paradigms.

*Freedom, comfort, happiness:* A number of the women interviewees affirm that they are happier in Australia than they were in Bangladesh. They credit freedom, comfort, privacy, leisure, entertainment, and above all a hassle-free peaceful life for this state of happiness with Australian life. Since migrating they feel particularly valued because they have become decision-makers in their own households. The dimensions of this change are made clear by *Bithi* in these words:

Before migration I used to live in extended family. Whenever I wanted to go anywhere, I had to seek permission from in-laws. I had to answer to a lot of questions; what I was going for, who I went with, when I was coming back, and so on. Being an educated and working woman it was embarrassing, at the same time humiliating. Now that I take the decision about what to do, where to go, when to come back, I feel really great!

*Maloti's* experience mirrors hers:

When I was in Bangladesh I was always confused, and shy. I couldn't decide about anything on my own. I never thought I would drive my car and hang around all by myself. I have discovered a new 'me' in myself, who is much more confident, active and enthusiastic than ever before.

These statements by *Bithi* and *Maloti* demonstrate that Bangladeshi women enjoy freedoms in Australia they never had in Bangladesh. The freedom of their lives in



Australia is acknowledged by almost all the women respondents. This replicates Ho (2006) who found that Chinese women enjoyed greater freedom after migrating to Australia.

A number of women respondents asserted that one of the great joys of their lives now is that they take family holidays together. Most respondents had stories to tell of family troubles that had undermined the chance to have a holiday break in Bangladesh. Some women also spoke of being able to save up for prolonged holidays, after which they feel mentally refreshed. It is not just going on holiday that provides these opportunities, but simply being able to 'do their own thing' which has had a significant impact on many women in this study. *Reshma* spoke very pointedly about this:

I was not familiar with the word 'fun' as long as I was in Bangladesh. Life went on like a machine, in the same circle: responsibilities, hassle in daily life, and so many complications. Now we try to go out on weekends and have fun.

Women respondents further attest to the usefulness and comfort conferred by the abundance of household appliances. According to them, the helping hands that lent family support in Bangladesh have been replaced in Australia by mechanical appliances. *Indrani*, a newly arrived Bangladeshi woman, did not take long to discover how comfortable these labour-saving devices could make her life:

Back in Bangladesh not many people are likely to have their own cars or to use washing machines. Hot water system is not available in every house. Only rich people could afford these. While in Australia these are not the symbol of luxury, instead very important in everyday life of people, irrespective of classes.

*Indrani's* account, and those of other women in the cohort, put it beyond any doubt that the availability of domestic appliances renders life in Australia more comfortable than life in Bangladesh. A number of women included in their list of hassle-free domestic aids the uninterrupted supply of necessary services (electricity, gas, and water). This was in stark contrast to the situation they were used to in Bangladesh, as *Reshma* explained:

The most common problem I experienced in Bangladesh was that water supply stopped when I was washing. The stoves ran out of gas in the middle of the cooking. Also the power shutdown when I was in the middle of something like baking, ironing, studying, or watching TV.

Time spent purifying drinking water was identified as another annoying and time-consuming task in Bangladesh.<sup>4</sup> In Australia, the women were pleased to discover, clean drinking water is available from kitchen taps around the clock.

*Positive family relationship:* Some of the women respondents report that the relationship between the members of the family has significantly improved after migration. Reasons given for this included the opportunity to spend quality time with their family, which strengthened their family bond. Husbands contributing

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<sup>4</sup> To ensure safety, tap water needs to be boiled and/or filtered in most Bangladeshi households. The majority of women respondents in this study singled out water purification as a much disliked chore.

around the home emerges as one of the noteworthy changes in family life reported by Bangladeshi women now living in Australia. In Bangladesh, cultural norms dictate that men are not expected to work in the kitchen or help their wives with household chores. In Australia, many men do vacuum-cleaning, lawn-mowing, dishwashing, and the laundry. Perhaps more importantly, many of them like to cook. They also help look after the children. *Reba* clearly approves of the change:

My husband and I work full-time. In the weekend, he takes care of laundry and vacuum-cleaning, while I go for shopping to buy groceries. Sometimes I take one child with me, the other one stays at home with Dad. After I come back from shop I start cooking for the whole week. My husband gives me hand if he is free that time. I don't think I could have run my family and household this way if I was in Bangladesh. I couldn't even ask my husband – do this or do that. That wouldn't be acceptable, you know.

*Reba's* description of the way domestic duties are shared in her Australian household reflects a mutual understanding between husband and wife that would be unlikely to eventuate in Bangladesh. In researching Asian immigrant families in New Zealand, Dixon et al. (2009) similarly indicate that after migration family bonds become much stronger than they were in the respondents' home countries.

*Driving own car:* Our interview findings indicate that obtaining a driver's licence and driving a car in Australia empowered Bangladeshi women, and constituted an important step in their integration. Those respondents who drive cars say they have witnessed a change in themselves since they obtained their licence. Beforehand, many women were dependent on their husbands to drive them to work or the children to school, or to take them to shopping or to the doctor's. In case of emergency, they had to use public transport, which a number found inconvenient, especially when travelling with children. *Reba* explained:

Before I got my driver's licence, I used to walk to school to bring my son back home. I used stroller to carry the little one. That was troublesome, especially in the afternoon of midsummer days, when temperature went up to 36 degree or more, or on the rainy days. Now that I have obtained a driving licence and can drive my own car, things are much better.

*Tumpa* agreed:

Driving my own car makes me feel valued. It gives new strength and confidence. I am no longer depended on my husband each time I need to travel.

As did *Maloti*:

Back in Bangladesh I was a housewife of an extended family. My sole responsibility was to make each person of the family happy and comfortable. Cooking spatula was the only thing I used to hold all the time. Now I hold the steering wheel, I am driving my own car. If I was in Bangladesh I would have been ended up inside the four walls of household, whereas in Australia I do something important, play a significant role. Isn't it fascinating!

The above quotations reflect the fact that these women possess a sense of pride, since they are no longer dependent on their husbands to pursue everyday activities. Acquiring a driver's licence and driving their own car is therefore identified as one

of the important indicators of successful settlement for Bangladeshi women. The reason is that a woman in the driver's seat is a rare sight on the roads of Bangladesh.<sup>5</sup> So, for a woman, driving her own car is huge challenge, one more likely to be met after migration. Once they have gained their licence, they feel valued. This study therefore concludes that a driver's licence has the power to work great change on the personality of a woman from Bangladesh.

**Challenges faced by Bangladeshi women migrants in Australia:** This study further reveals certain challenges faced by Bangladeshi women in Australia. Balancing between domestic and occupational responsibilities and non-recognition of qualifications are the most pronounced among the challenges. Traditional gendered role affects their life after migration in two ways; first increases domestic workload and second, reduces labour market participation. This section now discusses the nature of problems Bangladeshi women face in Australia.

*Increased domestic workloads:* The changed nature of domestic activity is identified by Bangladeshi women in Australia as a big challenge. Almost all of the respondents reported that they had domestic helpers (maids or menservants) in Bangladesh.<sup>6</sup> Besides, relatives and extended family members habitually played a significant role in reducing the stress of running a household. After migration they discovered that such support was not generally affordable in Australia. Sara recalls how she adjusted to the new reality:

My initial days were very stressful. Doing the chores all by myself was tiring, frustrating as well. I didn't do that much hard work when I was in Bangladesh. I used to have a helping hand who did iron my clothes before I was to go outside, for office, shopping or party. Other chores such as cleaning, washing and even cooking had been done in no time. So I was very relaxed.

Sara's words underscore how much the traditional Bangladeshi woman relies on helping hands around the home. They also serve as a reminder that the traditional housewife in Bangladesh can also look to support coming from members of the extended family. This support, as mentioned by several of the respondents, would include the doing of domestic chores, and help with child-rearing. Such assistance was particularly important to women who worked outside the home, regardless of whether they were living under the same roof as the extended family. Kinship assistance was of great significance; not only was help at hand as it was needed,

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<sup>5</sup> The social implications of women driving cars in Bangladesh are explained by Madhuri Narayanan (n.d.), Senior Advisor, Gender Equity and Diversity, CARE, USA. Although Narayanan specially focuses on the professional women drivers working for CARE, she emphasises that placing 'women in the driver's seat' makes the difference to women themselves by giving them freedom of movement. On the contrary, others (the general public) may stare at a woman driver. Based on Narayanan's experiences it is observed that women driving cars is still a revolutionary notion for women in Bangladesh.

<sup>6</sup> This is not surprising as labour is very cheap in Bangladesh. Hiring domestic helpers is quite common in other parts of Asian countries as well, such as in China and Hong Kong (Ho 2006, p. 503).

but it imbued women with a sense of strength, comfort and security. *Shabnam* recalled those days:

I lived nearby my parent's house. I used to see them almost every day, called them whenever I had any problem or needed something. I used to leave my son to my mum before I was going to work. I couldn't think of a single day without them close by. Now that I need to take care of everything, I miss them so much; I feel how significant that support was.

It is observed that paid domestic workers reduced *Sara's* workload which was tantamount to physical support, while *Shabnam's* appreciative words indicate that the support she received in Bangladesh meant more in terms of an emotional than a mere physical presence. Both kinds of support had been invaluable in their daily life in Bangladesh. So the absence of support networks came as a shock and source of distress to Bangladeshi women starting over in Australia. This finding supports the conclusions of other researchers, including Ahmed (2005), Kabeer (2000), and Gardner (2002) which commonly shows that migration intensifies domestic workloads due to the absence of support networks, such as those provided by the members of an extended family and or hired domestic staff.

*Traditional domestic role and non-participation in the labour market:* Despite the strong involvement of Bangladeshi migrants in the labour market, for one section of the participants in this study migration reduced the opportunity of engaging in paid work. Some of the women report that they sacrificed their career for the sake of their family. In spite of educational qualifications and English-language proficiency the expectations of a traditional gender role shut them out of participation in the workforce.

*Tumpa's* story is a good example in this context. In spite of being highly educated, she is not able look for a job, since she has little children to look after. The prosperity purchased by her husband's well-paying job is enough to meet her material needs, and pay the family's bills, but it cannot satisfy the need for her to feel valued outside the home, and that has left her feeling depressed. This story is one of high hopes and boiling frustration. The research data here lead to a conclusion similar to Ho's (2006) where the 'feminisation' of society leaves women confronted with the question of whether they should compromise their career ambitions to stay at home and care for their family.

A number of highly educated women in this research also confer that they had to compromise their jobs in the peak of their career. For example, *Aponra*, used to work in her desired occupation, but she had to give up that rewarding career as a consequence of becoming a mother. This could be defined as 're-domestication' or 'compromised careers' according to Meares (2010).

*Depression due to non-recognition of qualifications:* Many Bangladeshi migrants report that the qualifications they achieved before migration has not been recognised in Australian labour market. Also non-recognition of qualifications is much higher among women than men. Many of them took further studies to fit in the Australian labour market. Table 6 clearly demonstrates the propensity among Bangladeshi women migrants in taking further studies compared to their male

counterparts. The table shows that a majority of the female respondents (70%) have earned an Australian qualification, while for men the proportion is 41%.

Table 6: Post-migration further education of respondents (by gender)

Further education	Total (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Yes	56.4	40.9	70.1
No	43.6	59.1	29.9
N	209	122	87

Interviews uncover the state of displeasure due to non-recognition of qualifications among the women respondents. A number of highly educated Bangladeshi women who used to work as high professionals stress that they failed to utilise their degrees, therefore had to take up a low profiled jobs which do not match with their educational qualifications. Among the respondents who used to work as college teachers, medical doctors, government officers, or bankers remained unemployed after migration or some ended up as cleaners, child-carer, hair dressers, or check out assistants in super market. One of the respondents who used to be a teacher back in Bangladesh asserts-

I never thought of being child-carer, or a babysitter. When I first came to Australia I thought that this job was for uneducated women. But the reality is that I ended up as a care giver.

This remark clearly conveys a sense of despondency among women whose educational qualifications and potential do not lead to greater success in the workplace. This occupational degradation made them feel dissatisfied and uprooted, and eventually that affects their settlement negatively.

It is also observed that in most cases, they are not likely to face economic crisis thanks to their husbands' income. Yet they are dissatisfied with their changed roles. Women belonging to this particular cohort may not have a sense of belonging in Australia. They always hark back to their achievements and the glorious career they left behind, which indicates that advanced education and higher degrees may not, in and of themselves, always lead to successful settlement for women: academic credentials may even become a burden to them.

*Loneliness and economic hardship lead to family turmoil:* Although many of the respondents affirm that they are satisfied with their income and economic situation after migration, a significant minority say they are undergoing economic hardship. A number of them blame family turmoil on economic adversity, which is undermining their settlement process. It is also found that when loneliness and economic stress go hand in hand a worse scenario is likely to eventuate. *Moona's* story demonstrates the nature and consequences of economic hardship and at the same time her loneliness.

On the very first night in Australia *Moona* stayed in the house all by herself, since her husband had to go to night shift, and that went on for days. She spent hundreds of sleepless night in that lonely country house. The nature of her husband's work,

with its changeable rosters and weekend work was not conducive to family life. More importantly, despite the hard work his income was not satisfactory. Although they were not starving, they were in a perpetual financial hole. *Moona* was hoping one day her husband would get a suitable job that would let her live a normal life. However, that day did not come even after six years. She affirms that she and her husband often argue with each other and that their relationship has become tense and confrontational. The story shows the spread of *Moona's* loneliness, and dissatisfaction with life, that accompanied her husband's inability to take care of the family.

This finding is similar to that described by Martin (2003) where she explains that a husband's occupational failure may lead to economic hardship, which often has a negative effect on his spouse's life. Dixon et al. (2009) also reveal a similar story about an Indian woman migrant in New Zealand.

### **Conclusion**

The objective of this paper has been to identify the privileges and challenges Bangladeshi women experience after migrating to Australia. In so doing, this study collected data from a questionnaire survey and interviews of the Bangladesh migrants living in Australia. Quantitative data compares gender differentials on economic indicators of successful settlement and reveals a complex nature of women's economic participation after migration. Finding demonstrates that women's post-migration economic participation is higher than their pre-migration rate. However, in compared with men's labour market participation, women's post-migration participation is much lower, and so is their income. Nonetheless, the satisfaction with job and life after migration among women is much higher than men.

On the basis of qualitative information, the research has firmly established that migration to Australia liberated and empowered Bangladeshi women migrants in several ways. One substantial change to their lives derives from their having left a traditional society for an advanced industrial society, where they became familiar with new privileges and opportunities. These privileges and opportunities bring them more comfortable lifestyle than they could have imagined in their home country. More importantly, many of them find life after migration much more rewarding. This particular finding is similar to one of Martin's (2003, p. 28), where she observes that, in becoming aware of new rights and opportunities unavailable in one's country of origin, women migrants enjoy a 'greater ability to direct household priorities'.

However, for many women, higher post-migration economic participation comes at the expense of occupational degradation, the experience of working at low-skilled jobs that are incommensurate with their educational history. This situation often stems from the non-recognition of pre-migration qualifications. Therefore, the challenges facing Bangladeshi women migrants are no less significant than their achievements. These include increased domestic workload and a battle to balance the demands of motherhood and work. Family problems resulting mainly from economic adversity have also been observed.

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